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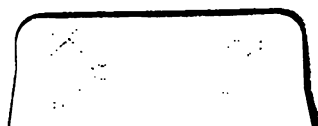
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Oct 1835
621

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627.



A
LETTER
TO
HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON,
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
UPON THE
PRINCIPLE AND TENDENCY
OF
A BILL
NOW BEFORE PARLIAMENT,
ENTITLED,
“ A BILL FOR ABOLISHING SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES
OF RELIGION IN CERTAIN CASES.”



BY THE
REV. FREDERICK OAKELEY, M.A.
FELLOW AND TUTOR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE.

OXFORD,
PRINTED FOR J. H. PARKER ; AND J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON,
LONDON.
1835.

627.

Lord Radnor's Bill respecting the Thirty-nine Articles.

WHEREAS the Subscription of particular Articles of Faith in the case of persons of tender years, and before they can have so accurately and minutely examined the same, and the grounds on which they rest, as to give an entire and implicit assent to the doctrines therein laid down, is unreasonable, and may tend to evil consequences : be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That from and after the passing of this Act, no person shall be required by any person or persons in authority in the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, or elsewhere, within the King's dominions, to *subscribe* or *declare his assent* to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole Clergy in the Convocation holden in London in 1562, or the Three Articles contained in the Thirty-sixth Canon, at the time of Matriculation at either of the said Universities, or of entrance at any College or Hall within the same, and until he shall have attained the age of twenty-three years, or, in case he shall take the degree of Master of Arts before he has attained the age of twenty-three years, until he shall have taken the said degree.

Provided always, and be it further enacted, That nothing in this Act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to exempt any person from the obligation to subscribe such Articles, or to make such declarations, as, by the custom and Statutes of the said Universities, are now required, before any person can sit and vote in the Convocation or Senate of the said Universities respectively, or as may now by law be required in order to qualify such person to take any Ecclesiastical Orders, or to preside or sit as Judge in any Court Spiritual or Ecclesiastical, or to hold any Ecclesiastical office or benefice whatsoever, or *as under the special requisition of the Founder of any endowment are now required to be subscribed, or made, to enable the Members thereof to enjoy the benefits of the same.*

MY LORD DUKE,

THE House of Lords will shortly be called upon to discuss a subject, which, whatever may be thought of it elsewhere, the University of Oxford considers to be one of the most important which has ever been brought before the notice of Parliament. The importance which Oxford attaches to the question of Subscription to the 'Thirty-nine Articles' is sufficiently attested by the zeal, I may say the enthusiasm, with which the Members of Convocation, a short time since, pressed from all parts of the kingdom to declare their sentiments upon the subject. What those sentiments were, in the great majority of instances, it is needless for me to remind your Grace. I will only say, that no matter of Academical legislation was ever, in the memory of the oldest Member of the University, more fully considered, more ably discussed, or decided by a more overwhelming majority.

It is natural, that the Members of the Oxford Convocation, after the large share of attention which they have bestowed upon this subject, and with the feeling that they have decided upon it to the best of their judgment, and upon the most con-

scientious grounds, should look with the greatest anxiety upon the prospect of its being reconsidered by others, who, whatever may be their political wisdom, and however sincere their desire of promoting the public good, are necessarily precluded, by the multiplicity of subjects to which they are required to give their attention, from bestowing upon any single question the same regard as those who are locally interested in it; and who must be prevented from bringing to the consideration of any subject connected with the Universities the benefit of that particular experience, of which no general prudence, and no rectitude of intention, can supply the place. And they cannot but feel positive alarm in contemplating the fact, that a measure, in which, both as Churchmen, and as Members of the University, they take so deep an interest, is about to be decided by those of whom many are acquainted only by report with the nature of the institutions of Oxford; and many more have no better personal knowledge of them to aid their decision, than that which they were enabled to form at a time when Oxford was not what it is, and when they, from youth and inexperience, were altogether incapable of appreciating its institutions.

With regard to the 'right' of Parliament to interfere in matters affecting the internal regulation of the University, I confess myself incompetent to give any positive opinion. A good deal, no doubt, depends upon what meaning we attach to the word

‘right.’ There is no written law on the subject, either on one side or the other. Precedents in favour of such interference there undoubtedly are ; but they are drawn from a period of our history, which few would wish to see restored. According to one view of the subject, Right is defined by Might ; and, of course, no one denies that, in this sense, Parliament has a right to do with the University what it will. But, if by ‘right’ be understood, equitable claim, reasonable pretence ; and, still more, if into the notion we allow to enter, (as surely, in the present case, we must,) not merely abstract propriety, but general expediency, (I use the word not in its popular, but in its true, sense,) then I think we must allow, that the Universities have a ‘right’ to legislate for themselves.

I grant, however, that the word is ambiguous, and I do not desire to press it beyond its just meaning. But, if not against the strict ‘right’ of Parliament to interfere with our internal regulations, yet at least against the propriety, the expediency, the wisdom, of such interference, I would respectfully, but decidedly, protest. I do unhesitatingly maintain, that, although, in the strict meaning of the word, *constitutional*, such an interference is yet an extreme and impolitic exercise of power.

My object, however, in presuming to address your Grace, is not so much to argue against the propriety or expediency of extrinsic legislation in matters affecting our internal discipline, as to state

to you the reasons, which, after some experience, and much consideration, have induced me, although not originally disinclined to some change in our system of requiring Subscription to the Articles, to feel strongly against the principle of the present measure. And I am the more disposed to confine myself chiefly to objections against the measure itself, because, in the petition which has been adopted by the University on the subject of Lord Radnor's Bill, the inexpediency of legislative interference is the topic to which it has been deemed most proper to allude. The very recent decision, however, of Convocation on the question of Subscription to the Articles, is a sufficient proof that this is not the only ground upon which the vast majority of the University objects to the measure now before Parliament. For it is sufficiently well known, that the decision of the 20th of last May was made against a measure far less subversive of our present system than Lord Radnor's Bill. The proposition on that occasion was merely to exchange Subscription to the Articles at Matriculation for a Declaration, designed by the framers of it to be no less exclusive of Dissenters than Subscription itself; whereas, it is proposed by Lord Radnor's measure to abolish Subscription without any substitute, and that not only at Matriculation, but likewise at the time of the first Degree.

The question of Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles at Matriculation is, I am well aware, not to be hastily confounded with that of the admission

of Dissenters to a residence, even as Undergraduates, amongst us. It would, of course, be possible for the University, after the abolition of the present test, to frame another which should be equally, and even more, exclusive, than Subscription to the Articles ; though when Parliamentary interference had once taken place, it would again, no doubt, and probably in a short time, be exercised to abolish any substitute for Subscription to the Articles upon which we might resolve. It would seem, I allow, to be implied by the preamble to Lord Radnor's Bill, that the admission of Dissenters to the University is not the immediate object which his Lordship has in view, in proposing a measure for the abolition of Subscription to the Articles. That the present measure, however, would from many persons receive support, not on account of its professed object, but as a step to something farther, we may, I think, reasonably presume ; and it is for your Grace to determine, how far this fact is, or is not, an objection to supporting it at all. That its obvious tendency too, though not its declared purpose, is to provide for the admission of Dissenters to the University of Oxford, I shall attempt presently to shew. Still, I am content, in the first instance, to view the measure with reference to the grounds of it stated in the preamble of the Bill ; namely, as a provision against the unreasonableness, and possibly dangerous consequences, of requiring Subscription from persons of tender age, who are unable to give

entire and implicit assent to the Articles of faith, which they are called upon to subscribe.

The "tender age" of which the preamble speaks, is implied, by what follows, to mean every age short of twenty-three. Even at the time of taking the Degree of B.A. after having attended, by the necessary arrangements of every College in the University, a course of Lectures on the Thirty-nine Articles, and been minutely examined in the contents of them for his Degree, the young man is still, according to this Bill, regarded as incompetent, from his youth, to subscribe them. With one exception, however; viz. in case *the founder of any endowment* (Academical endowments being of course included) *shall have required Subscription to the Articles as a necessary condition of participating in the benefits of his foundation.* What, then? is the objection above stated, in such a case as this, to give way? For aught Lord Radnor knows, there may be Colleges in Oxford, in which signature to the Thirty-nine Articles may be required by the founder as the condition of being elected to a Scholarship, or Undergraduate Fellowship. Now there are undoubtedly many Colleges in Oxford, in which boys of sixteen are admissible on the Foundation. Therefore, *when pecuniary benefit is at stake*, all the objections against early Subscription before stated (objections, which, if they are worth any thing, are paramount) are to give way. But if no such pecuniary benefit be at stake, Statutes, Aca-

demical or Collegiate, which now require Subscription to the Articles as a preliminary to Matriculation, and to the first Degree, are to be wholly disregarded. It is impossible not to apprehend, from the discovery of an inconsistency so palpable as this, that other objects are contemplated by the framers of the Bill than the removal of conscientious scruples to early Subscription.

But I confess myself to differ altogether from the opinion, frequently maintained even by good and wise men, and implied in the preamble of Lord Radnor's Bill, that young men, at the age of those who come to the University, and even afterwards, are unable to assent to the Articles upon a sufficient understanding of their contents. I am fully satisfied, and I speak after some experience, that young men, not only of twenty-one, (the age at which they ordinarily take the Degree of B.A.) but even of eighteen, (the age at which they ordinarily come to the University,) are fully competent to understand enough of the Thirty-nine Articles, to enable them to sign them from personal understanding of their contents.

As the mere opinion of an individual unknown to you, such a declaration would rightly be considered by your Grace as worthless ; as the result of some experience as a College Tutor, it will be deemed by you of more importance. In the College to which I have the honour to belong, it has been for a long time past the practice, to examine the

Candidates for entrance in the history of the Bible, and in the leading doctrines of the Church of England, as contained in the Catechism. To these subjects of examination we have, within the last few months, added another in the Thirty-nine Articles, with a view to the Subscription to be made at Matriculation. We have found, that, even without previous knowledge of any such intention on our parts, the Candidates had, almost without exception, read and considered the Articles, and were able to give a satisfactory account of the leading doctrines contained in them. Were it to be generally understood, that such knowledge is thought desirable previously to the act of signature, I have no doubt that our system of requiring Subscription to the Articles at Matriculation would act most beneficially upon the preliminary education of the country. That the administration, indeed, of our system admits of improvement, I am not disposed to deny. Much might, I think, be done, by introducing a theological examination at entrance in the different Colleges, if not in the University. But this object, I believe, is more likely to be effected, if the present practice of requiring Subscription be retained, than if it were abolished. Nothing can, in my opinion, be more desirable, than that young men should be induced to turn their attention to the leading subjects involved in the Articles of the Church of England before coming to the University.

I repeat then, that I believe such a *bonâ fide* assent to be perfectly possible, even at Matriculation ; it would be enough for me, in arguing against Lord Radnor's Bill, to prove it possible at the age of twenty-one. I can only say, that I have frequently met with young men in my own College, who, before taking their first Degree, have understood the Articles of the Church of England as well as any Clergyman need understand them, and far better than many actually do ; and that I never yet met with one who might not, if he pleased, know as much of them upon taking his Bachelor's Degree, as upon entering the Ministry.

The Thirty-nine Articles are constantly spoken of as a formulary of faith far more difficult to comprehend than the Catechism, which much younger persons than those who come to the University are expected to understand in such measure as to assent to the doctrines contained in it. Surely this is a mistake. In one sense the Catechism is as difficult as the Articles, and in another the Articles are even easier than the Catechism. Doctrines they both involve, to human reason mysterious, and even by the oldest, and the best instructed, to be received altogether upon the authority of Holy Scripture. One mystery is as difficult to understand as another, and the very elements of our religion are full of mystery. But, in respect of being fuller and more explicit than the Catechism, the Articles are less difficult to be understood. I mean,

that it is less difficult to collect from them what the doctrines of the Church are ; the difficulties arising out of the nature of those doctrines remaining in both cases the same. All which is necessary, with regard either to the Catechism or the Articles, is, that the young person should be able to prove the doctrines contained in them from Holy Scripture ; and, if we expect this in our Charity Schools, I do not see why we should expect less in our Universities.

As to “ minute and careful examination ” of the contents of the Articles, without which it is stated, in the preamble of Lord Radnor’s Bill, that Subscription to them ought not to be required, I confess that, while I think it might be, in every case, desirable, I do not hold it to be necessary as a preliminary requisite to Subscription in the case of a young man at his Matriculation. He is either a member of the Church of England, or he is not. If he be, it may surely be expected of him, that he should allow the authority of the Church, in which he has been educated, (represented to him as it is, in his parents, in his previous instructors, in the University, among whose members he is about to be enrolled,) to supply his lack of minute personal acquaintance with the subjects involved in the Articles. If he have been educated in a different Church, (that of Scotland, for instance, many members of which enter the University of Oxford,) it is to be expected of him (and an expectation it is,

which, in most cases, I have reason to believe, will not be disappointed) that he shall have made himself acquainted with the Articles of the Church of England, or, at least, that his parents, knowing that he will have to sign them on entering the University of Oxford, shall have explained to him the difference between the doctrines of the Church whose Articles he is about to sign, and that in which he has been brought up. In the instances of persons entering the University who have been brought up as Presbyterians, which have come under my notice, I have invariably found this to be the case. And, when the views of our University in requiring Subscription at Matriculation shall (as, after the late discussions we may reasonably expect that they will) be more fully understood, than in some detached instances they have, through our own neglect or that of others, hitherto been, we may trust that in every case such previous knowledge of the subject will be found to exist.

Anxiously desiring, therefore, as I do, that young men, before coming to the University, should gain a knowledge of the contents of the Articles, and be able to prove the main doctrines contained in them, as they are taught to prove those of their Catechism, by reference to Holy Scripture, I am by no means prepared to say, that I consider this personal knowledge in every case an essential preliminary to admission. I think that the Articles may be rightly and conscientiously signed by persons possessing

various degrees of acquaintance with their contents: and even by those who know no more of them than that they contain the well considered and generally acknowledged doctrines of the Church of which they are members. It is not as if such a deference to authority could ever, even at a much later period, yield altogether to personal understanding of the subjects of the Articles. It does not, and it cannot, do so. It enters, to a certain degree, into the Subscription before Ordination. In the case of very young persons, it is the sole ground of belief in matters of small, as well as of great, importance. As knowledge increases, and capacity opens, it mingles with personal understanding, or experience, of subjects, in forming the proper ground of assent. A certain degree of it remains to the latest period of our lives, and is in fact essentially wrought up with the texture of our minds. It is a spirit which haunts us, turn where we will, and protest against it as we may. We cannot dismiss it from our minds, if we would, and ought not, if we could. Of the faith of thousands who have no leisure, or no capacity, for enquiry into speculative truths, it is the sole, yet perfectly sufficient, basis. And as I should say that it is very desirable even for a poor man to have a minute acquaintance with the grounds by which the doctrines of the Church to which he belongs are supported, while I believe that he may possess a saving faith upon the authority of others, and without such minute personal knowledge ; in

the same way I think that a young man may believe in the Articles upon the authority of the Church so as to justify him in signing them, while yet it is in the highest degree desirable, that he should, at the earliest period at which he is capable of understanding them, study them for himself.

I am well aware, that this is a ground of argument not likely to be generally understood or appreciated. There is a great, and I almost fear an irreconcilable, difference of sentiment on this subject between different persons, and different parties, in this country at present. Many say, that nothing is to be believed in religion, which is not understood ; while others (with whom I agree) maintain, that, upon religious subjects, we must believe a great deal more than we can perfectly understand. The refusal to recognize authority as a guide in matters of Faith is not, indeed, to be confounded with that rejection of every thing mysterious in religion, which is the great principle of Socinianism. But I cannot help thinking, that somewhat of the same state of mind is implied by both. I do not say that the authority of any particular Church is to be ranked with that of Holy Scripture. Far otherwise. But only, that those views of Scriptural truth, in which the wisest and best men of every age, using prayer to God for the enlightening of their minds, and all other proper helps to knowledge of divine things, have agreed in maintaining, are of far greater authority than any ordinary person's

private interpretation of the word of God. This I take to be the middle way of the Church of England, equally removed from Popery, (which attributes infallibility to the decrees and councils of its own Church,) and from that ultra Protestantism, which makes each man's reason, unaided by prayer, and uninfluenced by the opinion of the Catholic (that is the universal) Church in every age and country, (for such has always, notwithstanding the corruption of particular Churches, existed) the rule of his faith.

But I am digressing into a wide field. I only seek to direct your Grace's attention, as briefly as possible, to the *principle* upon which Subscription to the Articles at Matriculation is mainly grounded. The denial of that principle is, I believe, at the root of many of those opinions upon Ecclesiastical subjects, which are abroad in the present day; and of those connected with the University among the number. I know that there are many who disclaim (and I believe sincerely disclaim) a wish to impugn this principle of submission of the judgment to authority in their desire of bringing about changes in our Academical system. But I cannot help thinking, that it may lurk where its existence is unsuspected.

But, My Lord Duke, let me ask, whether principles of the nature of that to which I have here adverted, be not, whether right or wrong, entitled to the most serious and careful consideration, on the part of those who approach to the discussion of a

subject like that which is about to be brought before the House of Lords? It must be quite obvious, that a measure for the abolition of a law which, almost coeval with the Reformation in its origin^a, has worked well for 250 years; which has twice been submitted to the consideration of the University, and twice, after the maturest reflection, been sanctioned by the decision of Convocation; which, on a late occasion especially, was ratified by that body, in spite of every thing by which men of little conscience, or little reflection, were likely to have been actuated, and which were of a nature to influence even the thinking and conscientious; public opinion; the probable agitation of the question in Parliament; the known or suspected sentiments of those high in the political world, and among others, of the Chancellor of the University himself; it must be obvious, I say, that an institution like this is not to be lightly thought of, or hastily assailed.

I have hitherto considered this subject chiefly with reference to the principle laid down in the preamble of Lord Radnor's Bill; that, namely, of the unreasonableness and danger of requiring Subscription to Articles of Faith from young men, and those who have not minutely and carefully examined them. I will now speak briefly of what I conceive will be the ulterior consequences of the

^a In the age of Queen Elizabeth, A. D. 1581.

measure, whether contemplated, or not, by the framer and supporters of it.

It is provided by the Bill, that, from the time of its passing, no person shall be required by any person or persons in authority, in the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, either to subscribe the Articles, or to *declare his assent* to them. Thus, therefore, not merely Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, but even any such Declaration as that lately proposed to Convocation by the Heads of Houses, will be rendered illegal. But it will, of course, be perfectly competent to the University to frame any Declaration, as a test, both at the time of Matriculation, and of the first Degree, by which the terms of the Bill, should it pass into a law, will not be contravened. It is easy to imagine several Declarations which might be framed without violating the condition of the Bill ; some of them less, and some of them *more*, exclusive of Dissenters, than the present test of Subscription. It is not unreasonable to conjecture, that the difference would turn on the side of greater exclusiveness ; a difference of which many, however they might allow it as an *alternative*, would greatly lament the necessity. For there are many, who consider the practical operation of the present system in admitting some Dissenters amongst us, (Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland, for instance, and a few others,) as one of its greatest advantages. We do not at present invite Dissenters ; but we do not object to receive any who, on

whatever grounds satisfactory to their own consciences, are content to subscribe the Articles of the Church of England.

But some, perhaps, may place their reliance upon the supposed opinion of the present Board of Heads of Houses. Even, however, if that opinion were, (as there is reason to believe that it is not,) in the majority of instances, favourable to the admission of Dissenters in greater numbers than, according to the present system, is possible, it must be recollected, that the Board is not unchangeable. It is necessarily altered in some measure every year, by the change of Proctors; very few of the present Members of that Board were members of it twenty years ago; the ordinary course of human life (to say nothing of high offices in the Church, not unlikely to withdraw some of the *Whig* Members of it) may produce an entire change in the sentiments of the majority of that body at no very distant period.

But, upon what Oxford may or may not do, those who are called upon to decide with reference to the present Bill have no right to speculate. They are to look only to that Bill, *as it is in itself*. Our future proceedings are contingent; the terms of the Bill are plain and specific. And, according to those terms, the University of Oxford is thrown open to Dissenters of every denomination; not to those only, whose principles, however in some respects erroneous, may be as consistent with true piety

as our own, but to those also, whose tenets I believe to be utterly irreconcilable with spiritual and Evangelical religion. The only exception is in the case of persons about to receive votes in Convocation, and of those admitted to Fellowships and Scholarships, where Subscription to the Articles is required by the Founder as a special qualification for participating in the benefits of the foundation. Now the fact is, that in no College, as far as I am aware, is such a condition required. The Statutes of Colleges were framed either in Roman Catholic times, when no test was deemed necessary, because no visible difference of opinion existed ; or since the Reformation, when the provision made by the Statutes of the University for the exclusion of Dissenters has superseded the necessity of any similar provision in the separate Colleges. If, then, this clause in the Bill be designed to exclude Dissenters from the foundation of our Colleges, it will be found, in practice, wholly ineffectual towards such an end. The only security against the election of Dissenters to Fellowships will be in the feeling of the electors for the time being ; a security I need not say how insufficient. It is one great excellence of our present system, that it leaves as little as possible, in matters essential, to the discretion of those who are required to administer it. The Statutes of the University act upon the system. Thus, lectures in the several Colleges on the Thirty-nine Articles, and an examination in those Articles at the first

Degree, are rendered indispensable by the act of Subscription required at the beginning and end of the career of every Undergraduate. For these most wholesome practices, as well as for others, in our system, the Bill of Lord Radnor will leave us no better guarantee than the fickleness of individual opinion.

The fact is, that Lord Radnor's Bill indicates, as might be expected, a want of acquaintance with the constitution, and actual state, of the University of Oxford. This is the fundamental objection against all legislation for us out of our own body. The power of legislating effectually for the good of the University, necessarily involves a large share of local knowledge ; not merely a knowledge of the Statutes of particular Colleges, as well as of the University in general, but such an acquaintance also as experience alone can give, with the actual working of the present system. Nothing can be more unjust and untrue, than to say that our attachment to the present system of the University, in its essential features, is the result of a mere bigotted and thoughtless acquiescence in things as they are. It is far oftener a conscientious conviction, arising from observation of the actual effect of the present system, that our ancestors were wiser in these matters than many of ourselves. I am not insensible to many and grievous deficiencies in our mode of administering our system ; nor surprised that this our neglect should have brought obloquy

upon our institutions on the part of those little capable of estimating their real value. But the improvement which has taken place in every essential respect in the University of Oxford, during the last thirty years, is such, as to afford the most cheering prospect for the future; while yet it is most true, that far more remains to be done than has yet been accomplished. I am far from lamenting the ordeal of examination and enquiry to which our system has of late been submitted. I am satisfied, that in many minds the farthest removed from bigotry, the result of those enquiries has been to cause an approbation, upon the highest principles, of institutions in which they before acquiesced out of mere custom, and the prejudices (far from being always blameable) of education and habit; while I have no doubt that the effect of this scrutiny has likewise been in many instances productive of improvement in the administration of the existing system.

Only suffer us (I would say most humbly to your Grace and to the Parliament) to prosecute these enquiries, and to effect these improvements, among ourselves. There is really no want of candour, and desire of improvement, among us. The University of Oxford is not, as it is often supposed to be, a body distinct in character and feeling from all others. The elements which enter into the constitution of other bodies are mixed up, nearly in the same proportion, here as elsewhere. I do not be-

lieve that, as a body, we are deficient in any of those qualities which are essential to good deliberation ; while I am sure that our responsibilities, as Clergymen and Members of a Christian University, in addition to those which we share with all other Christians, ought to make us, and I believe in great measure actually do make us, examine subjects, with reference to those only good and true principles, which politicians, of whatever party in the State, are too apt to sink in imaginary or insufficient notions of expediency ; and I hope we are making progress towards the time in which these principles will actuate us altogether.

In conclusion, let me respectfully remind your Grace, that in elevating you to an office, which has been pronounced, on a late public occasion, the “ most distinguished of the many distinguished honours which have been conferred upon you^b, ” this University was actuated by the sincere belief, that your Grace would have the will, as all knew you from your great talents and great Parliamentary influence to have the ability, to maintain unimpaired our rights and privileges, and to preserve inviolate that connexion between the University and the Church of England which is alike beneficial to both. Let me, in the name (as I think, after the manifestation of feeling which has been made, I am justified in saying) of the whole University, implore

^b Speech of Lord Mahon at the Pitt dinner.

your Grace to use your influence against the interference of the Legislature with those matters of internal arrangement, on which, from our long professional experience in education, from our clerical character, and from our habitual modes of thinking, we consider ourselves best qualified to decide. I beg also to remind your Grace once more, that from internal evidence in the provisions of this Bill, by which tenderness of conscience is allowed for only where pecuniary interest is not at stake, it is to be apprehended, that the fair words which grace the preamble are not advanced so much for the maintenance of a principle, as for the purpose of promoting ulterior objects, less likely to be acceptable to those among whom the measure is proposed. Supported then by that overwhelming majority of Members of Convocation, non-resident as well as resident, who last summer raised their voice against the admission of Dissenters, and the consequent ruin of our religious system of education, I call upon you to protest against a measure, which is only the more to be suspected, because it seems to endeavour after compassing its end by indirect means. And, supported by that meeting of Convocation, which, composed of our advocates collected from far and near, did, scarce a month ago, by a majority of eight to one*, reject the proposition for substituting a Declaration in the place of Sub-

* 459 to 57.

scription, I call upon you not rashly to give the countenance of your great name to a measure for sweeping away that institution, with respect to which the University has so recently and so loudly proclaimed, that, after mature consideration, it knows of no better means of excluding those whom it holds dangerous to admit among its members, as well as of directing the attention of the youth of this kingdom, not only while under its immediate charge, but during all their preparation for an Academic course, to those great doctrines of Religion which have been sanctioned by the wisest and best of our Church and nation, and with which it conceives that the highest interests of this country must stand or fall.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord Duke,

&c. &c.

Oxford, June 24, 1835.



